

THE AMERICAN RADIO RELAY LEAGUE  
Administrative Headquarters NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT, U.S.A. 06111

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To: All ARRL Official Observers

From: Communications Manager

Subjects: The Reluctant OO  
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Status of Old Subjects

No crucial subjects to cover this time, even though we are quite late in getting this bulletin out. We'll fill it out mostly with meanderings gleaned from the field. This bulletin goes out to OOs twice annually, usually in June and December. At one time it had a strict deadline, because it was a vehicle for notifying OOs the date of the next FMT. Now this information appears in QST and the FMT is not strictly an OO function, so the deadline is relaxed. This can cause one to get into bad habits, especially when the press of other matters makes it seem more important to take care of them first.

Actually, we don't hear a great deal from our OOs between bulletins and as a result have to "dream up" subjects for the bulletin if we are to make it more than a one- or two-pager. In light of today's economic situation, this seems to some to be an unwarranted expenditure of League funds. So we have to wonder: (1) Is this bulletin widely and carefully read by the OO appointment group? (2) In view of lack of response from the field, is a less frequent (say annually, instead of semi-annually, or perhaps only "as needed") bulletin indicated? Putting out a simple bulletin like this is no great production problem. Dredging up content is a problem, however, and it should not be necessary. The field should supply most of the content. In preparation for this bulletin, it was noted that most of the material in our "source file" comes from one person, as has occurred in previous bulletins, and he is tapering off. We need more material, gang. You don't have to be a writer; just let us know what topics you would like to see covered -- topics of interest and of use to observers, not the general amateur public. We'll endeavor to write them up for the bulletin. If you wish to submit a rough draft, all the better. We'll polish it up or, if necessary, even rewrite it if the subject is one which hits the mark.

The Reluctant OO

Recently we received from one of our SCMs a letter he had received from an OO expressing bitterness and frustration with his observing efforts, mostly as a result of negative responses he had received from observed amateurs. This OO announced his resignation, effective immediately. "My decision to resign," he said, "is primarily due to two things. First, I feel the deregulation on the part of the FCC is going to see Amateur Radio start on its downward slide, and secondly, the people whom I talk to about the violations they commit. A trend is starting in Amateur Radio that started ten years ago in CB: total disregard for regulations and ethics.

"Over the past year," he went on, "I feel my efforts as an OO have been a waste. The people I notify just don't give a damn and tell me so. There is nothing I can do to change these types. So, if a station is splattering on ssb, let him go until the FCC does something about it (which they usually won't)."

It occurred to me at the time I first read this that there are probably many OOs who feel this way, although most of them don't resign, they just go through the motions of holding their appointments. Perhaps this is one of the reasons we have over 400 OO appointees but get less than 200 reports. Anyway, we felt inclined to write this particular OO and try to get him back into the fold, since he seemed to be the type of



conscientious and sensitive OO we most needed.

Well, it worked. After a couple of weeks during which he was apparently mulling it over, he asked to be reinstated. If it worked with him, perhaps it will work with some of you others who feel that your efforts are at best wasted, at worst unappreciated. Therefore, I am using up some space in this bulletin to quote or paraphrase some of the pertinent parts of my long letter to this OO.

"The situation is bad, no doubt about it. Blatant disregard for regulations and ethics is getting worse every day, and we have a pretty good idea why (influx of undisciplined CB operators). But I doubt if this is the whole answer. I think it's more a reflection of the general decline in social mores. For example, twenty or thirty years ago I seldom had any feelings of uneasiness about walking anywhere and everywhere I pleased and, being a great walker, I did so. Now I even feel a little uncomfortable about walking home from the office after dark. This is followed by resentment that this should be so, and frustration that nothing seems to be able to be done about it.

"Any maybe nothing can. But if all those wishing something could be done, like yourself and myself, withdraw any semblance of effort to try, the situation cannot but get worse; or, in any case, it will certainly not get better of its own accord. The OO corps lets violators know that their violations are being observed. Even if the violations are willful, the notice itself will be a deterrent to many; admittedly not to all. Even some of those who feel deterred will react negatively, but they'll look into the matter just the same, and this is what we are after.

"Of course some will just tell you to go to hell and continue unheeded. But the OO's only function is to notify. That's the end of it. He doesn't have to argue with the guy, he doesn't have to help him rectify the trouble, he doesn't have to heckle or threaten or report him to FCC. Just send him the card or form. If he's a chronic offender, send him two notices and after that write him off as hopeless. You say they just don't give a damn. Well, neither do we -- that is, give a damn whether they give a damn or not. The OO cannot be a frustrated policeman unless he tries to be a policeman to begin with.

"So I think your big problem is that you threw too much of yourself into your job as OO. You can't be the remorseless, emotionless machine that just grinds out the notices and lets the chips fall where they may. Sure there are many who don't care, and I agree with you that they seem to be increasing. Our business is with those who do care but don't know any better. Most of these are grateful to receive OO notices. A few want to argue about it, but will look into it nevertheless. And a small minority (although it may not seem like it) tell you to 'shove it'. We drop the latter -- not because we don't care, but because we can't do anything about it. Let's concentrate on those we can help. No use wasting emotion or medicine on terminal patients. How about giving it a think and reassessing your attitude? We need good OOs."

#### Arizona OO Information

The Arizona SCM, W7DQS, recently put out some special info for his OOs that seems to hit the mark both as to phraseology and content. Some of it is more specific than instructions provided by headquarters, but SCMs are authorized to qualify such instructions provided the general principles are not tampered with. We quote from Marsh's material only in part but, since he's as well qualified as a writer as we are (maybe better), we'll tamper with the text very little.

"All notices made to apparent FCC rule violators shall be by mail, and the OO shall not become personally involved with anyone to whom he issues notices, unless called upon for technical assistance. An OO is not obligated to provide such assistance, but is



welcome (to do so) in the friendly cooperative spirit that has long been a characteristic of amateur radio. Mail notices eliminate the possibility of embarrassing the persons (involved).

"With the huge growth of vhf-uhf amateur activity in recent years, wherein the vast majority of active operators and any OOs who observe and issue OO cards on these frequencies are within spitting distance of one another, there is bound to be personal contact between them at times. This makes it important for OOs engaged in vhf-uhf observing (e.g., Class V) to be very cautious and conservative when issuing notices, so as not to stir up antagonism, which as we all know can be done so easily in the relative intimacy of fm operating as it has developed on the ham bands.

"It has long been a recommended procedure for OOs never to issue a notice if they are not sure the violation actually occurred. 'If in doubt, don't' is the general idea, and it's a good idea. Misunderstandings of observed conditions can cause antagonism toward the OO responsible, or toward the OO program as a whole, and these don't get any rule infractions corrected, they just get people mad. The possibilities for personal friction in vhf-uhf are enormous, so the need for extreme caution also is great.

"However, there is a great opportunity for a dedicated OO to perform useful work on vhf-uhf if he is careful how he does it. Frequency measurement and deviation measurement alone can perform a great service to avoid adjacent channel interference, and of course spurious emissions, although apparently not as common as they used to be, still can be a source of interference, both inside and outside the ham bands. Adjacent channel interference, as long as all components of the signal are within the band edges, is not an FCC violation, but because of the channelized operation used in fm, an OO who is qualified to measure frequency (and has demonstrated it in FMTs) may decide to be helpful by sending a post card. If he uses an OO notification card, he should change the wording to make it clear that the condition observed is not an FCC rule violation.

Always keep in mind that accidental interference to another amateur station is not a rule violation in itself. We've all caused it sometime and we will again, unintentionally. Deliberate interference is a FCC rule violation but is extremely hard to prove, and if you can't prove it, don't send an OO notice. All sensible amateurs deplore deliberate interference and we all have gut feelings about just which interference is deliberate, but those gut feelings are not proof.

"Notices issued by mail by an OO recognized and accepted by his fellow amateurs as competent in the fields he's observing can help clear up those problems without generating any damaging personal friction, and without stirring up gossip on the bands among the poorly informed. The OO who really does his job well isn't even known to anyone except those to whom he sends mail notices.

"Once in a while the pride of being an OO may produce a little expansion of the ego, causing the OO to feel he is a bit better than his fellow amateurs. This is only natural; we're all subject to it, and with a title like "Official Observer" any of us can get to where his hat doesn't fit as well as it used to. When this occurs, it's time for the OO to put away the post card notices and button his lip for a while until the always-elastic ego shrinks back to normal size. We all make mistakes, OOs (and SCMs) included, but since OOs are 'in the business' part of the time of pointing out other guys' mistakes, then it behooves the OO to do his pointing carefully and with a helpful attitude, lest he become a red-faced victim of his own brashness.

"Finally, after the month's observing is done, there is that infernal report to the SCM to grind out. Like death and taxes, it too is inevitable, for without it the OO will some day find he no longer has an OO appointment....for the SCM can giveth and the SCM can taketh away. It might be argued that an OO could be doing his job, and yet



not issue any notices, and consequently not need to make monthly reports to his SCM because he didn't find any violations, although he was busy looking. However, this argument falls apart for one or the other of two reasons:

1) There really are violations, most of them unintentional but violations nevertheless, on all amateur bands; so an effective observer will find them, even though it often does take a lot of time to really establish adequate 'evidence' and identification to justify issuing a card.

2) If there are no violations, then there is no need for an OO.

"Sometimes you will hear amateurs asking that OOs be given some sort of actual enforcement power, or make them recognized informers for the FCC monitors. Interestingly, this idea was voted down in a recent ARRL poll by OOs themselves. OOs are not secret police, nor censors. They are unobtrusive safety watchmen....and that's all."

#### Have You Read CD-100 Lately?

What's CD-100? Aha! We knew you hadn't read it lately! Maybe some of you never read it at all. CD-100 is the OO Standing Operating Instructions. Nothing pretentious about it, just a 10-page litho circular, but it contains a lot of meat. Many questions we receive from OOs (each of whom received a copy upon appointment) are answered in it. That's how we know that some of you haven't read it.

The current edition was last revised in April of 1975, but it isn't yet enough out of date for a rewrite; that is, if we did rewrite it, not much would need to be changed. CD-100 not only tells you what an OO is and what he does, it also tells you what he is not and what he doesn't do. It mentions how OOs are appointed and by whom, and their qualifications, the different classes (Class V omitted, but will be added next revision), the forms used and how to use them.

A subsection entitled "What to Watch for and How to Notify" deals with regulations violations, clicks, chirps, drift, modulation, splatter, overmodulation and flat-topping, obscenity, indecency, profanity, false signals, inadequate and improper identification, willful and malicious interference, ethics. It provides some guidelines for what is profanity or obscenity and what is not, observations about willful and malicious interference, whether or not OO notices should be sent across the U.S. - Canadian border, and the status of reciprocal licensees.

How Much Assistance? is another subhead, a subject covered earlier in this bulletin. Then the guide goes on to discuss reactions to observer notices and how they can best be dealt with. The importance of keeping records and methods for doing so are discussed. Keeping up on your frequency measuring techniques comes in for mention, as does the place of the ARRL Intruder Watch in the picture. The circular winds up with an admonition to be very careful in sending out notices, to be sure you have identified the recipient correctly and that you have not offended him, etc.

Perhaps one of the most useful parts of CD-100 is the index of regulations appearing on the last three pages. This is as exhaustive as we could make it, but probably is not complete in every detail. It saves the OO some time in looking up the number of a regulation that covers a certain type of violation. Of course the regulations have been changing so fast that this index is already somewhat out of date, but the procedure is, upon hearing a certain type of violation, to refer to the index and get the regulation number. Then, read the regulation before sending the notice. For example, you hear a signal with modulation products outside the amateur band. This comes under "confinement of emission," and the regulation is 97.63. Or you hear someone you think might be willful



interfering, so you look this up in the index, find the regulation is a section of the Radio Act, and FCC regulation 97.125.

Have you read CD-100 lately -- or ever? Read it! It's part of your OO job.

#### Through the Folder

Well, let's see what the folder has to suggest in the way of topics.

FMT categories. W4RHZ suggests four categories of FMT measurements, instead of lumping them all together. First is the group that uses counters, whether a part of or attached to the receiver or separate. Second would be the group that uses receiver dial markings, perhaps with the aid of outboard or receiver-installed secondary frequency standards. A third group could be those who use heterodyne frequency meters, such as the BC-221, Lampkin or even a home brew type. And fourth would come those who measure by any other means such as interpolating or measuring audio differences, etc. He feels this would make the competition fairer (more fair?) and would attract more people to participation in the FMTs. He admits that the four categories will need more definition, but what do you think of the idea?

Half Out of Band. To the extent that FCC monitors pay any attention to the amateur bands, one of the first things they pay attention to is out-of-band operation. What we do inside our own bands is of concern, of course, but the first concern is to keep us inside them -- and so the amateur who violates a band-edge is in greater danger than the one who violates a sub-band edge or commits another kind of violation inside the bands. One thing many amateurs don't seem to know is where their sidebands are. They feel that as long as their transceiver dial setting or readout says, for example, 14349, they are inside the band. Not so, especially if they are on usb, which is normal on 20. While their center frequency may be 14349 (if the receiver calibration is correct), their sidebands are certainly extending outside the band, and this is equivalent to out-of-band operation (97.63). Send them cards (Class I and II OOs only), let's see if we can't have a respectable margin of safety on the high ends of 20 and 15. The same situation obtains on 40 and 75, but this is on the low end of the phone segment abutting the cw band, so it is not so serious (except to the cw operators). Solution to use lsb on the high end of 20 and 15 and usb on the low end of 40 and 75? Maybe, but still risky. A ragchew group for years operated on 3999, maybe still does; there was a tendency to get a little careless, slide out of band. Either that, or someone's calibration was cockeyed.

Blabbity-Blab. That's what some of the IDs sound like on voice, these days. Trouble is, whom do we send the notice to if we can't figure out the ID? This office in the past has advised that notices not be sent if identity is in doubt. In other words, don't guess that the call you hear is W1N1M when it might have been M1N, NAM, MAN or any of a half dozen other combinations. An ID that is unreadable or ununderstandable not only is no ID, it's a superfluous transmission. But how do you tell him so if you can't identify him?

Well, one way is to give him a call on the air and let him know you can't recognize his call without phonetics. But most OOs shy away from this, to avoid hassles, and we don't blame them. Another way is to give him a call on the landline (rates after 9 p.m. are pretty low for a one-minute conversation); but this has some of the same drawbacks, and also costs. So what some OOs are doing is taking a guess at it, but explaining on the card that the ID is not certain and sort of apologizing in advance if it is the wrong guess. The FCC reg number is 97.87, and the apology could read: "Please excuse if I guessed wrong," or something like that. Admittedly not much room on CD-213 (Form 10) for remarks, so use a CD-22 (Form 12) if preferred. ARRL will still pay the postage.

No, we're not picking on phone operators. Some of the RTTY and cw IDs are mighty sloppy, too. Okay to take a guess and send a notice, provided you indicate you're just guessing. Be nice. It's easier (for most of us) than being nasty, and a lot more progressive.



Fund Drives. A letter just received from an OO asks if communications conducted by amateur radio to assist a Heart Fund drive are illegal. Our February QST notes (p. 78) seemed to imply that they are.

My memory is a little hazy and probably not completely accurate on this, but it says that it was a question of this nature, asked by someone of FCC, that prompted the new regulations in the first place. FCC said, in effect, "We're sorry you asked, because we have to tell you that it is illegal but we recognize it as a public service and we would never prosecute the matter." (This is not an exact quote, despite the use of quotation marks.) Collecting money for the Heart Fund is part of the regular business of the Heart Assn. (or whatever its official name), and participation by amateurs in the fund drive "facilitates the regular business" of the organization (97.114). It is indeed technically illegal.

So should we send out notices for it, or shouldn't we? That's a mighty hard question to answer. In the above example, years ago someone at FCC indicated such activities would not be prosecuted. This does not remove the possibility that someone in the same agency today would exhibit quite a different attitude. The OO who asked the question (and who has been given the above answer) said: "Amateur radio really isn't worth much if we cannot do some good things such as this." Yet, to let it continue without protest from our self-regulators is to gamble. Where does our duty lie? What a dilemma, 'twixt charity and duty!

Let's gamble! In the small fund drive for a worthy cause, in which amateurs want to participate and indeed do so, let's not harass them with OO notices. On the other hand, let's not encourage such activities, either. If someone decides to mount a binational amateur radio fund-raising drive for the Red Cross or the Salvation Army, we may have to get busy with our OO notices. Meanwhile, let's concentrate on other forms of regulations violations. 97.114 is too gray.

Class V Qualifications. It has been pointed out that although Technician licensees are eligible for Class V OO, such appointees must be of the highest quality, because they'll be working very close to, not a great distance from, those they are sending notices to. We already have had one hassle concerning a local OO notifying a repeater user that he was making derogatory remarks about another amateur and/or repeater. This is not illegal, but it is inimical, and we want to keep it off the air if we can. The problem in this case was not whether the perpetrator violated the rules (he did not), but whether the remarks made had actually been derogatory. The amateur receiving the notice actually came into my office, asking that something be done about the OO in question. Naturally, I referred the matter to the SCM, who supported the OO. But meanwhile, damage had been done. No question but what a lot of sleazy operation takes place in everyday repeater use, just as in other amateur operation; and admittedly you can't prevent everybody from getting angry when you tell them what they do is wrong or unethical or morally improper. Nevertheless, if you continually rub your fellow amateurs the wrong way, it would be a good idea to look into your notification procedures and methods. There must be something wrong. OOs are people, and people are often wrong. You could be too.

Portable Signing. All OOs will have noted that this is no longer required. The editorial in Dec. QST which urged amateurs to continue using portable and mobile ID, merely as a useful operating practice, was controversial in its reception, and in any case was not a signal for OOs to continue sending out notices for lack of portable and mobile indicators in ID. If any of you are still doing so, please desist.

Reciprocity. We continue the policy of notifying reciprocal operators in the U.S. when they violate FCC regs. They are committed to observe them when operating in this country. However, whether or not you can notify them depends on whether you have an address. At one time, FCC furnished us with these addresses so we could use them in forwarding OO notices (among other things). For reasons that aren't quite clear, this service is no longer available (probably the old bugaboo of staff). The call book contains a list of reciprocals, but since the turnover is quite rapid, it's probably not too current. If the reciprocal you want to notify is not in the current call book, you'll have to forget it unless you can get an address some other way. If you don't have a current call book, you can send



the notice to HQ. We'll forward it if we can. About 50% of the time, it's no go.

#### Status of Old Subjects

Once in a while someone asks "What's the status of this or that or the other thing?" We thought it might be useful, occasionally, to go over some of the old ground to see if we have dropped any balls, or merely to inform observers where we stand on certain matters.

OO Forwarding Bureau. We haven't completely dropped the idea, but as of the moment there does not seem to be sufficient need to justify effort in this direction. Thanks to those who volunteered their services. We have your calls on file and you will be the first consulted if this proposal is resurrected.

Malicious QRM. Malicious QRM is still taking place, especially on the monitoring services (WCARS, MCARS and ECARS) which are resented by some individualistic amateurs. But the furor has died down quite a bit, as it was bound to when the jammers got tired of jamming. Occasionally it pops up. Repeaters have their problems, too, both from amateur jammers and intruders. It is undoubtedly something that will be with us for good, to a greater or lesser extent. The WCARS suit against K6AU et al has run into rough sledding and we understand is all but defunct. Meanwhile, if you hear something that sounds like willful or malicious interference, no reason why you can't send out a CD-213 or CD-22. Unlike FCC, we don't have to prove anything, we're just trying to get amateurs to cooperate in keeping our bands clean, for our own good.

Call Books. Each year the top ten OOs get call book subscriptions paid for by ARRL. Others high on the list are recipients of year-old call books being phased out at headquarters, while the supply lasts. This program is not so easy to administer as you might think, because a very important principle is involved. The call books are not given out as a reward for past services, but as a means for better rendering OO functions in the coming year. Thus, an OO who resigned at the end of the year would not be eligible even if he sent out a thousand notices. One who indicated his intention of quitting, for whatever reason, similarly wouldn't get a call book. Others prefer to subscribe on their own, or for some other reason may not want a call book; that's their privilege, of course. As a result of these considerations, each eligible candidate has to be consulted before the subscription is entered or the book sent. One of the things required is that the prospective recipient indicate his intention to continue in the program for the coming year. But yes, the call book program is still in operation, on the principle that if and when you show that you are capable of and willing to mount an exceptional effort, a call book subscription will be furnished.

FMT. This used to be a major topic in this bulletin, but frequency measuring became a competitive exercise among non-OOs and has now become a contest. A little different from the run-of-the-mill frantic-QSO contest, but still a contest, nevertheless, and is now administered by the Contest Branch of the ARRL CD. Be this as it might be, the FMT is still a matter of concern to OOs, especially those in Class I and Class II, because in order to receive those classifications and keep them you have to prove you can measure within the required tolerances. This isn't tough to do, and many OOs would like to see it made tougher (we did halve the tolerances, coupla years ago). But OOs and SCM take note! Class I and II OOs must still submit FMT measurements at least twice annually.

Reimbursement. OOs are eligible for reimbursement for postage expenses only. If you prefer to pay your own postage, certainly no objection from here, but the provision exists, you might as well use it. Easiest way to do it is to buy a sheet or roll of stamps and keep track of how many you use. If you use a lot, you may wish to seek reimbursement monthly, otherwise quarterly or semi-annually. It's up to you, but don't seek reimbursement for any amount less than a dollar. How do you do it? Very simple,



just enter it on a CD-183 and send it in via your SCM. If you send it direct to headquarters, we only have to send it back to your SCM for his initials indicating his approval. This wastes both our time and yours (and costs the League more postage; postage costs!).

Rules & Regs. Although the League doesn't print Part 97 of FCC's rules separately, it is included in full in the License Manual. Some years ago it occurred to us that headquarters should make copies of these rules available to OOs. Accordingly, reprints of the regulations chapter of the LM were sent out to OOs. This procedure has been repeated several times. So far, not many OOs have told us that it is useful, so maybe we'll stop it. How about an "on request" procedure? That is, any OO requesting it may receive a free copy of the LM, on the assumption he will use it as a regulations reference. This is just an off-the-cuff proposal that will have to be cleared with top ARRL management, but we'll work on it. Probably not more than 10% of OOs will take advantage of it.

"Good Guy" Monitoring. Nothing official has been done about this -- that is, no cards have been devised for the purpose for use by OOs. There are too many philosophical clinkers, the main one being that every amateur should be exemplary in his conduct, therefore it doesn't make sense to single out for special recognition those who are. But, tell you what! Those OOs who note an exceptionally good performance on the part of an observed amateur, a performance which exemplifies everything that is good and that we are trying to achieve, may feel at liberty to drop him a postcard or even a letter complimenting him. Postage used for this purpose may be reimbursed. We don't think it will be abused, because not many OOs will go to this much trouble, whereas it would be a simple matter (and less effective) to mail a pat-on-the-back form card.

Anything else you'd like to know the status of? Sound off, we'll answer you and also comment in the next bulletin if this seems indicated.

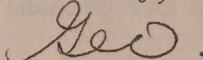
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As usual, starting from practically nothing we have turned out a pretty fair-sized bulletin. The next OO Bulletin is due to be composed in May, for mailing in June. If you have anything for it, let's hear from you. Meanwhile, thanks again for your continued good work in a good and progressively needy cause. 73.

Fraternally,



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GH:jbp